PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO VALIDATE THE TRIVIAL NAME "ELEGANS" GOULD, 1837 (AS PUBLISHED IN THE BINOMINAL COMBINATION "MALURUS ELEGANS") (CLASS AVES)

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(On behalf of the Checklist Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union.)

(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)341)

The Checklist Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union petitions the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to use its plenary powers to suppress the trivial name *elegans* Forster (J.R.), 1794, *Mag. merkwurd. neuen Reise Beschr.* **5** : 128 (as published in the binominal combination *Motacilla elegans*) and thereby to validate the trivial name *elegans* Gould (J.), 1837, *Birds Australia and adj. Islands* (1) : pl. 2 (as published in the binominal combination *Malurus elegans*), on the ground that the strict application of the *Règles* in this case would lead to confusion rather than stability.

2. In 1837, John Gould introduced the name *Malurus elegans* for a Western Australian bird, for which this name has been in use ever since—for a period of over 110 years.

3. In 1937, however, Mr. T. Iredale pointed out (*The Emu* **37** : 95-99) that in 1794 J. R. Forster, in his *Magazin von merkwurdigen neuen Reise Beschreibungen* applied the name *Motacilla elegans* to a different bird, namely that to which in 1783 (*Gen. syn. Birds* **2**(2) : 581) Latham had applied the name *Motacilla cyanea*.

4. The two birds discussed above are currently regarded as belonging to the same genus, and in consequence the name *elegans* Gould, 1837, is invalid, being a junior secondary homonym of the name *elegans* Forster, 1794. The strict applications of the *Règles* in the present case would cause great confusion, for it would not only mean that the Western Australian bird would be deprived of the name by which it has been universally known since 1837 but would also involve the transfer of the name *elegans* to another species in the same genus. This would be a very high price to pay for the sake of bringing into use the name *elegans* Forster, 1794, which has never had any currency, virtually the only reference to it in the literature being in the account given in Iredale in 1937.

5. It is for the foregoing reasons that the International Commission is asked to take the action specified in the first paragraph of the present Commission. The Commission is asked at the same time (1) to place the trivial name *elegans* Gould, 1837 (as published in the binominal combination *Malurus elegans*) on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology*, and (2) to place the trivial name *elegans* Forster, 1794 (as published in the binominal combination *Motacilla elegans*) on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Trivial Names in Zoology*.